

NEWS CENTER Maine

Bangor warming shelters faced increased demand this winter

Maine had a colder winter than average.

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BANGOR, Maine — Warming shelters have felt the pressure of cooler temperatures this winter.

“We are constantly running low and needing more,” said Seth Dee, who helps oversee Together Place’s warming center.

Together Place opened a new warming shelter this winter after news that the Bangor Area Homeless Shelter wasn’t opening its warming center this season.

“That was scary news for a lot of us because people have died on the streets here before freezing to death,” said Dee.

The shelter operates from 7 p.m. – 7 a.m. every day throughout the winter season. It serves about 40 people each night, but Dee said there have been nights with too many people in need and too few beds.

“There have been times where we’ve had to rely on other shelters in the area to make sure everybody had a place to stay,” said Dee.

One of those places is the Brick Church, located a block away from Together Place.

“Had that place not opened, we would have our normal amount plus the 40 that they take up the street, said Zach Spaulding, ministries coordinator of Brick Church.

Spaulding helps serve 40-60 people a night. He said the warming shelter has had no issues with gathering food and other resources this winter.

“We're right on, you know, par for coming in just about where we were last year at this time,” said Spaulding.

Over at the daytime shelter, the Well Warming Center, president Mel Coombs said he added a room to his building to help accommodate 20-30 more people on average.

“If it is cold and the weather is bad, then we'll accommodate for whoever comes in the doors,” said Coombs.

Coombs hasn't had issues with retaining volunteers this season, however Dee said that has been one of Together Place's biggest challenges.

“It's a big ask to watch people all night long and to have people come in night after night,” said Dee.

Dee hopes the shelter can hire workers next year, so they can rely less on volunteers. For more information on Bangor warming shelters, go to the city's website.